



This is part of chapter 1, from “Marley & ME”, entitled “And Puppy Makes Three”. Read it and then fill in the blanks with the correct forms of the verbs in brackets.

We were young. We were in love. We **were rollicking** in those sublime early days of marriage when life **seems** about as good as life can get. We **couldn't** leave well enough alone.

And so on a January evening in 1991, my wife of fifteen months and I **ate** a quick dinner together and **headed off** to answer a classified ad in the *Palm Beach Post*.

Why we **were doing** this, I **wasn't** quite sure. A few weeks earlier I **had awoken** just after dawn to find the bed beside me empty. I **got up** and found Jenny **sitting** in her bathrobe at the glass table on the screened porch of our little bungalow, **bent over** the newspaper with a pen in her hand.

There was nothing unusual about the scene. (...) We were a two-newspaper-career couple. (...) We **began** every morning poring over the newspapers, **seeing** how our stories **were played** and how they stacked up to the competition. We circled, underlined, and clipped with abandon.

But on this morning, Jenny's nose **wasn't** in the news pages but in the classified section. When I **stepped** closer, I **saw** she **was feverishly circling** beneath the heading "Pets—Dogs."

"Uh," I **said** in that new-husband, still-treading-gently voice. "Is there something I should know?" She **didn't answer**. (...) I looked more closely at the newspaper in front of her and saw that one ad in particular seemed **to have caught** her fancy. She **had drawn** three fat red stars beside it. It **read**: "Lab puppies, yellow. AKC purebred. All shots. Parents on premises."

"You know," she said, looking up. "I **tried** so hard and look what happened. I can't even **keep** a stupid houseplant alive. I mean, how hard is that? All you need **to do** is water the damn thing."

Then she **got** to the real issue: "If I can't even keep a plant alive, how am I ever going to keep a baby alive?" She looked like she **might start** crying.

The Baby Thing, as I called it, **had become** a constant in Jenny's life and **was getting** bigger by the day. (...) years passed. We **had barely begun** dating when various job opportunities pulled us in different directions across the eastern United States. At first we were one hour's drive apart. Then we were three hours apart. Then eight, then twenty-four. By the time we both ended together in South Florida and _____ **tied** the knot, she was nearly thirty. Her friends **were having** babies. Her body **was sending** her strange messages.

I leaned over her from behind, **wrapped** my arms around her shoulders, and kissed the top of her head. "It's okay," I said. But I had to admit, she raised a good question. Neither of us **had ever really nurtured** a thing in our lives. Sure, we **had had** pets growing up, but they **didn't really count**. We always knew our parents **would keep** them alive and well. We both knew we wanted to one day have children, but **was** either of us really up for the job? Children **were** so . . . so . . . scary. They **were** helpless and fragile and looked like they **would break** easily if dropped.

A little smile **broke out** on Jenny's face. "I **thought** maybe a dog **would be** good practice," she said.